

The University of Chicago

THE GERMAN SOCIALISTS AND THE
FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REICH FROM
THE LONDON CONFERENCE TO RAPALLO

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

AUGUST, 1946

By
WILLIAM MAEHL

Reprinted from
THE JOURNAL OF MODERN HISTORY
Vol. 19, No. 1, March, 1947

The University of Chicago

THE GERMAN SOCIALISTS AND THE
FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REICH FROM
THE LONDON CONFERENCE TO RAPALLO

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
AUGUST, 1946

By
WILLIAM MAEHL

Reprinted from
THE JOURNAL OF MODERN HISTORY
Vol. 19, No. 1, March, 1947

*66512



THE GERMAN SOCIALISTS AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REICH FROM THE LONDON CONFERENCE TO RAPALLO

WILLIAM MAEHL

THE policy of fulfilling the Treaty of Versailles did not originate, as Arnold Brecht implies,¹ with Walther Rathenau in 1922 but with the Majority and Independent Socialists—with Hermann Müller, Gustav Bauer, Hugo Haase, even Philipp Scheidemann—and as early as 1919. The past policies and acts of the Social Democrats, who were essentially pacifist and Western in their Weltanschauung, determined that they should be the most zealous advocates of conciliating the foe. In 1914 they had tried to avert war.² When this proved impossible, they had urged an early peace of forgiveness without indemnities and with boundaries established on the basis of the self-determination of peoples.³

¹ *Prelude to silence* (New York, 1944), p. 18.

² For the history of the Social Democratic party on the eve of the conflict see especially F. PFEMFERT, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie bis 1914* (Berlin, 1919); E. DOERZBACHER, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die nationale Machtpolitik bis 1914* (Gotha, 1920); K. MANDELBAUM, *Die Erörterungen innerhalb der deutschen Sozialdemokratie über das Problem des Imperialismus, 1895–1914* (Frankfort on the Main, 1929); Eduard DAVID, *Die Sozialdemokratie im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1915); Richard MÜLLER, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik* (Vienna, 1924), I; Konrad HAENISCH, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie in und nach dem Weltkriege* (Berlin, 1916); and Curt SCHÖN, *Der "Vorwärts" und die Kriegserklärung* (Berlin, 1919).

³ Socialist views on foreign policy and war aims during the conflict are treated by MÜLLER; Richard BERGER, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie im dritten Kriegsjahr* (Munich-Gladbach, 1917); L. KANTOROWICZ, *Die Sozialdemokratische Presse Deutschlands* (Tübingen, 1922); H. HERZFELD, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die Auflösung der nationalen Einheitsfront im Weltkrieg* (Leipzig, 1928); and Ernst DRAHN, *Das Archiv der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, seine Geschichte und Sammlungen* (Berlin, 1920), and *Revolutions-Chronik der Jahre 1914–20* (Berlin, 1920). The work by Edwyn BEVAN, *German*

Their main ambition during the war was the restoration of the solidarity of the western proletariat as the guarantee of European living standards and culture. They believed with an unimpeachable sincerity in the ideal of comradely cooperation among the workers of England, France, Belgium, Germany, and other advanced European countries. Sustained by this belief, the German Socialists did everything within their power to inspire the Allied peoples with confidence in the new and democratic Reich. After the November revolution the Social Democratic party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands or S.P.D.) and its smaller offshoot, the Independent Social Democratic party (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands or U.S.P.D.),⁴ formed a government that made earnest efforts to remodel Germany along Western lines and to accommodate Allied wishes. The Socialist ministers carried out the exceptionally severe terms of the Armistice, turned a cold shoulder to pariah Soviet Russia,

social democracy during the war (New York, 1919), is marred by prejudice. Philipp SCHEIDEMANN, *Memoiren eines Sozialdemokraten* (Dresden, 1928), contains much illuminating information, but its value is somewhat lessened by the fact that much of the work was written from memory and years after the events described.

⁴ A history of the U.S.P.D. is badly needed. The only one extant, E. PRAGER, *Geschichte der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1921), is inadequate and dated. This should be supplemented with MÜLLER, I and II; E. HAASE, *Hugo Haase: sein Leben und Wirken* (Berlin, 1929); Richard LIPINSKI, *Die Sozialdemokratie von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1927); and Siegfried MARCK, *Reformismus und Radikalismus in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1927).

and showed deference and even pusillanimity to France's protégé, Poland. Such was the prolegomenon to the later policy of fulfilment.

The Socialists were chagrined when the Allies broke their pledge, given on November 5, 1918,⁵ to make peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points. But the Weimar government had no alternative except to submit to the Treaty of Versailles. The policy of conciliating the West, which had alienated Russia, and the military impotence of the Reich pointed to capitulation as the only course. The Socialists, who dominated the government, consoled themselves with the hope that by carrying out the treaty provisions Germany might eventually win the foreign support necessary to resist French efforts to dismember the Reich. Toward this goal of minimum security the German cabinets of the post-war period toiled without clangor of arms and with industry and integrity. The production and delivery figures are evidence of the effort made toward fulfilment between 1919 and 1922.

On several occasions in 1919 and 1920 the Allies threatened to enforce military sanctions against Germany for alleged violations of the treaty. Instead of making concessions to the struggling democracy, heavily assailed by its domestic foes, the Allies resorted to tactics that made impossible the orderly exercise of central authority within the Reich. France was the worst offender. By promoting separatism, encouraging confusion in the western industrial districts, and extending its zone of occupation, France made life miserable for the young republic. In April 1920 the Majority Socialist chancellor, Hermann Müller,

⁵ *Vorgeschichte des Waffenstillstands: amtliche Urkunden* (Berlin, 1919), No. 101; Prince Max von BADEN, *Erinnerungen und Dokumente* (Stuttgart, 1928), pp. 593-94; and SCHEIDEMANN, II, 263-64.

confessed the failure of all efforts to appease France.⁶

It was the grand illusion of the German Socialists that France's allies would soon desert it because of its evident ambition to rule Europe. But this belief found no confirmation in the results of the conferences of Spa, Paris, and London. All these established the unity of France and England and the isolation of Germany.⁷ An array of impossible reparations demands, going far beyond any reasonable construction of Allied claims under the peace treaty, was paraded before the German delegation at Paris in January 1921 and at London in March of the same year.⁸ The Allies were in agreement in demanding a total of two hundred and twenty-six milliard gold marks plus a variable levy of 12 per cent of the value of Germany's exports over forty-two years. The total German indebtedness—about two hundred and seventy milliard gold marks—was considerably more than the entire national wealth of the country in 1921. The Ma-

⁶ *Verhandlungen der verfassunggebenden deutschen Nationalversammlung* (Stenographische Berichte), CCCXXXIII (Apr. 12, 1920), 5048-54; and *Die deutsche Nationalversammlung im Jahre 1919*, ed. E. HEILFRON (Berlin, 1920), IX, 290-96.

⁷ For Socialist editorial reaction to the Spa and Paris conferences see "Das deutsche Angebot," *Vorwärts*, July 16 and 17, 1920; *Freiheit*, July 17, 1920; "Spa," *Neue Zeit*, XXXVIII (1920), 385-90; Erwin BARTH, "Das Resultat von Spa," *Neue Zeit*, XXXVIII (1920), 416-20; Max COHEN, "Die Konferenz in Spa," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LIV (1920), 580-87, and "Zur Londoner Konferenz," *ibid.*, LVI (1921), 172-78; Heinrich PEUSS, "Nur nicht verzweifeln!" *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LIV (1920), 638-42; "Deutschland und die Pariser Beschlüsse," *Vorwärts*, Feb. 1, 1921; *Freiheit*, Feb. 1, 1921; and Ludwig QUESSEL, "Das Zahlungsprogramm für die Wiedergutmachungsschuld," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVI (1921), 125-31.

⁸ For the decisions taken at the important Paris and London conferences see Carl BERGMANN, *Der Weg der Reparation: von Versailles über den Dawes Plan zum Ziel* (Frankfort on the Main, 1926), pp. 66-75 and 88-93.

jority Socialist organ, the *Vorwärts*, called the Paris decision "perhaps the greatest parody in world history" and denounced it as contravening Article 233 of the peace treaty.⁹ An opposition group within the S.P.D., which advocated a French or continental orientation, agreed that the decision was severe but insisted that it illustrated the bankruptcy of the official Anglo-Saxon orientation. This group believed that it was naïve to expect succor from England.¹⁰ The U.S.P.D., recently purged of its revolutionary left wing, took no strong stand toward the Paris and London decisions but pressed for the continuation of negotiations.¹¹ These, however, were broken off in March 1921. Immediately thereafter Marshal Foch sent his troops into the Rhine ports of Dusseldorf, Duisberg, and Ruhrort, and in these places the German customs were seized. The Socialists applauded the Centrist chancellor, Konstantin Fehrenbach, when he censured the use of force against a defenseless people. Nevertheless, both the S.P.D. and the U.S.P.D. insisted upon the resumption of negotiations.¹²

Feeling that England had failed it, the Fehrenbach government now sought to secure the mediation of the United States between Germany and the Entente. The

Majority Socialists, who were not represented in the cabinet, sympathized with the aim of Foreign Minister Walther Simons.¹³ But, on the whole, the confidence of the S.P.D. in the government was declining. It was not simply that Simons had failed to mollify the French attitude but that his failures were jeopardizing the life of the republic, as was illustrated by the March 1921 Communist uprising and by rumors that another reactionary *Putsch* like Kapp's was about to be launched. Only two things induced the Majority Socialists to continue a wavering support of the government: the lack of a good Socialist substitute for Simons, who was completely conversant with all moves past and present on the diplomatic chessboard; and the conviction, based on sad experience, that the Allies would treat a Socialist government no better than a bourgeois one.

Simons caused considerable annoyance in the reichstag when on April 26 he blandly disclosed that without consulting parliament he had sent two notes to the American chargé d'affaires, requesting American mediation.¹⁴ The foreign minister said that he was aware of the enormous responsibility that he had assumed but denied that he had acted undemocratically. Hermann Müller, chairman of the S.P.D. reichstag group, mildly chided the foreign minister for his action but conceded that the earnest tone of the note to Harding was proof that Simons sought only the best interests of the German people. The Independent Socialist spokesman, Rudolf Breitscheid, was less gentle in his criti-

⁹ "Deutschland und die Pariser Beschlüsse," *Vorwärts*, Feb. 1, 1921.

¹⁰ QUESSEL, *loc. cit.*, p. 126.

¹¹ See the speech by Georg LEDEBOUR in *Verhandlungen des Reichstags* (Stenographische Berichte) (hereafter cited as "*Reichstagsverhandlungen*"), CCCXLVII (Feb. 2, 1921), 2312-16.

¹² Speeches by Otto WELS (S.P.D.) and by Rudolf BREITSCHIED (U.S.P.D.), *ibid.*, CCCXLVIII (Mar. 12, 1921), 2851-58 and 2866-74. Cf. the views of the opposition Socialists in the S.P.D., who took the government to task for failing to present a clear and practical set of counterproposals which should take into account the need to reconstruct northeastern France and Belgium (L. QUESSEL, "Wiederaufbau und Kontinentalwirtschaft," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVI [1921], 217-22).

¹³ Thus Heinrich CUNOW declared that America was financially interested in rehabilitating Germany ("*Hardings Politik*," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX [1921], 1-5).

¹⁴ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (Apr. 26, 1921), 3413-23.

cism.¹⁵ He accused the government of following a policy of resignation and drift. He regretted, moreover, that the foreign minister seemed to have left the impression that he was not disposed to take the initiative in resuming negotiations until the French had evacuated the cities on the Right Bank of the Rhine. His assault climaxed in an indictment of the reckless policy of a cabinet that had placed before Germany the iron choice of accepting the Paris demands or of submitting to sanctions. "We are of the opinion that this government, which is purely bourgeois in character," said Breitscheid, "has gambled with the interests of the German people in the last few weeks. The note to America—that was placing the future of the nation on a single card!"

Toward the end of April it was evident that the government was rapidly losing the support of the Left. The *Vorwärts* was beginning to discuss the advisability of forming a cabinet under Socialist leadership.¹⁶ Simons' new defense of his policy before the reichstag on April 28 failed to impress anyone.¹⁷ His personal vindication was forgotten in the excitement occasioned by the news that he brought to the chamber. He reported that the cabinet was in receipt of an ultimatum from the Reparations Commission. The note had set the German liability at one hundred and thirty-two milliard gold marks but had left the government only a few days in which to examine the details of the decision. The Allies were demanding anew the surrender of the entire gold reserve of the Reichsbank to the Bank of France. Should the German government fail to agree to the payment of what remained

in spite of reductions still an impossible sum, the Allies would resort to further military sanctions.

The difficulties of the Fehrenbach-Simons cabinet were aggravated by a Polish attempt forcibly to set aside the verdict of the Upper Silesian plebiscite of March 20, 1921, which had yielded an impressive majority for Germany.¹⁸ In his speech of April 28 Simons had told the reichstag that some three hundred thousand Polish troops were concentrated along the Upper Silesian frontier, and on May 3 he brought the alarming news that the attack in force upon the region had commenced.¹⁹

The inability of the Fehrenbach-Simons cabinet to rescue Upper Silesia undoubtedly contributed to the political crisis,²⁰ but it was really the reparations dilemma that provoked the cabinet's resignation. Late on May 3 Berlin learned that the American government had rejected Simons' request for mediation.²¹ The United States government did not regard the German counterproposals as an adequate basis for reparations conversations with the Entente. Hot on the heels of the American note came one from the Entente embodying the Allies' final decisions regarding the amount, time, and nature of the payments demanded from the Reich.²² The German government was required to accept the terms within six days, under pain of oc-

¹⁸ A total of 707,605 electors had voted for Prussia; only 479,359, despite ruses to enlarge this total, had cast their ballots for Poland (Robert MACHRAY, *The Poland of Pilsudski* [London, 1936], p. 139).

¹⁹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX, 3556-57.

²⁰ For Socialist expressions of opinion on the Upper Silesian question see Theodor MÜLLER, "Zur Abstimmung in Oberschlesien," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX (1921), 6-9, and "Das unteilbare Oberschlesien," *ibid.*, pp. 49-52.

²¹ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 4, 1921.

²² *Ibid.*, May 6, 1921.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* (Apr. 27, 1921), pp. 3442-51.

¹⁶ *Vorwärts*, Apr. 24 and 25, 1921.

¹⁷ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX, 3471-80.

cupation of the whole Ruhr Valley. The note from London arrived during the night of May 5-6 when the Fehrenbach government was already in dissolution.

Among other things, the London ultimatum demanded the immediate and full payment of twelve milliard gold marks, which, according to Article 235 of the treaty, had fallen due on May 1, 1921 and which had allegedly not been paid *in toto*. The ultimatum also demanded disarmament down to treaty level and the punishment of "war criminals." Only three parties were unequivocally and unanimously in favor of accepting the ultimatum. These were the two Socialist parties and the Center.²³ For a fortnight past the Majority Socialists had been hinting that they preferred to accept the Paris decisions rather than face new sanctions.²⁴ This view was shared by the Independent Socialists.²⁵ Both S.P.D. and U.S.P.D. now denounced the Allied ultimatum as a treaty violation but strongly favored acceptance because they feared that worse terms would follow rejection.²⁶ The Socialists, however, emphasized the fact that acceptance without the loyal cooperation of big business would be an empty gesture.

With the London ultimatum due to expire at midnight on the 11th the Communist organ, *Rote Fahne*, and the newspapers of the Right—the *Kreuzzeitung*, *Tägliche Rundschau*, and *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*—clamored for rejection. But, although Oskar Hergt, Count

Kuno Westarp, and Hugo Stinnes beat the drums of resistance, it was observed that neither the German Nationalists (Deutsch-nationale Volkspartei or D.N.V.P.) nor the German People's party (Deutsche Volkspartei or D.V.P.) was willing to form a cabinet. Their leaders were apparently aware that a government of nonfulfilment would not last a week.

With the Ruhr and Upper Silesia simultaneously at stake—an unprecedented crisis in German history—the Majority Socialists decided, on May 9, to enter a new government in collaboration with the Center. Otto Wels told the reichstag: "The Social Democratic group has decided to participate in a government which, by accepting the ultimatum, will save Germany from the immediate catastrophic consequences of rejection and which, to the best of its ability, will make an honest effort to fulfil the tasks laid upon us."²⁷ The *Vorwärts* declared that the S.P.D. was seeking to preserve the unity of the state and to avert extensive military occupation. The party expected no thanks but only a rain of vituperation from Hergt, Stinnes, Stresemann, and others. Yet the *Vorwärts* proudly said that "the rescue of our people from ruin is a deed that carries its own reward."²⁸

The new cabinet was headed by another Centrist, Josef Wirth, a former minister of finance. It later came to include, as foreign minister, the career diplomat Friedrich Rosen and, as minister of reconstruction, the president of the General Electric (A.E.G.), Walther Rathenau.²⁹ No cabinet in the lifetime of the

²³ Schulthess' *Europäischer Geschichtskalender* (hereafter cited as "Schulthess") (1921), Part I, p. 157.

²⁴ *Vorwärts*, Apr. 23 and 25 and May 3 and 4, 1921.

²⁵ *Freiheit*, May 2, 3, and 4, 1921.

²⁶ *Vorwärts*, May 9 and 10, 1921; and *Freiheit*, May 8 and 9, 1921.

²⁷ *Vorwärts*, May 11, 1921.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; cf. the remarks in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVI (1921), 431.

²⁹ List of cabinet ministers in *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (June 10, 1921), 3629.

Weimar Republic made greater efforts to execute its pledges than that of Wirth. The new chancellor was an amiable person who had a knack of smiling in the most desperate situations, a mannerism that made him obnoxious to many, for it conveyed the impression of shallowness. But Wirth could afford to be buoyant, for his prestige with the trade-unions was immense. For a Centrist and a mere schoolmaster, he enjoyed an incredible influence over the working class, which may be attributed to his known sympathy with their domestic objectives. His influence did not stop at Majority Socialist circles but was felt in the camp of the Independent Socialists. His words even carried to quarters which, it was said, would otherwise have listened only to Moscow.³⁰ Paradoxically, the chancellor's support within his own party was weak, and after only a short time in office he found himself opposed by the right wing of the Center.

In his ministerial declaration Wirth warned that it would be pointless to accept the ultimatum with mental reservations.³¹ A really sincere desire to fulfil must accompany Germany's signature. "Only through performance, not through words, can we convince our foe of the honesty of our intentions." He asked, however, for an elastic construction of the London decisions, such as would take into account Germany's diminished productive facilities and its minimum human needs. The Majority Socialist spokesman, Wels, endorsed the chancellor's remarks and defended him against the aspersions of the Right.³² Wels did not attempt to hide the consternation

with which all Socialists viewed the London ultimatum. Its literal execution, he predicted, would depress not only German living standards but those of all Europe.

Perceiving nothing in the ministerial declaration to encourage belief that a radical departure in foreign policy was about to take place, the opposition group within the S.P.D. maintained an attitude of reserve toward the new government. The journal of the group reiterated its customary admonition that the Anglo-Saxon orientation would work the ruin of Germany and adduced the London ultimatum in support of its position.³³ Similarly, the U.S.P.D. was cautious and, at first, uncertain that the Wirth government deserved its support. It approved, however, of the cabinet's acceptance of the Allied demands. Georg Ledebour, one of the party chiefs, pressed especially for the fulfilment of the disarmament clauses of the note.³⁴ He declared that, in an hour when Polish imperialism was rampant, everything must be avoided that might promote in Allied countries sentiments prejudicial to German rights.

The London ultimatum was accepted in the reichstag by a vote of 220 to 172, but only the Center, the S.P.D., and the U.S.P.D. voted unanimously for signature.³⁵ The Majority Socialist organ, *Neue Zeit*, commented soberly on the occasion: "The fulfilment of these obligations will tax our productive capacity to the limit. That is the meaning of our signature, neither more nor less."³⁶ From a

³⁰ Friedrich STAMPFER, *Die vierzehn Jahre der ersten deutschen Republik* (Karlsbad, 1936), p. 218.

³¹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (May 10, 1921), 3629-30.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 3630-31.

³³ *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVI (1921), 437-39.

³⁴ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (May 10, 1921), 3637-40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3654.

³⁶ Arthur HEICHEN, "Die Belastung des deutschen Volkes durch die Reparation," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX (1921), 217-21.

dwindled national wealth not exceeding one hundred and seventy milliard gold marks,³⁷ Germany was required to pay one hundred and thirty-two milliard gold marks plus the Belgian war debt or a minimum total of one hundred and thirty-seven milliard. Debentures for this fixed portion of the nation's indebtedness were to be turned over to the Allies and secured by a mortgage on the public property and revenue of the Reich and the *Länder*.

Despite the fact that the Allies showed no disposition to assist in the revival of German credit, the Wirth government in the course of the next nine months gave solid evidence of good faith. This it did only at great cost to Germany, which, in consequence of the relentless schedule of deliveries, experienced a tide of inflation, suffering, and resentment. At the end of the first month Wirth was proudly able to announce that Germany had kept its word and had delivered one milliard gold marks as of May 30.³⁸ The chancellor was hoping to pay over three and a quarter milliard gold marks during 1921. He admitted that the sum was vast but said that nothing was to be gained from disputing the practicability of this schedule. "The state of freedom is not too dear even when purchased at the heaviest sacrifice." He indicated that the government would avoid resort to the printing presses as long as possible and, instead, would institute a program of higher taxes. Years of unremitting toil lay ahead, warned Wirth. As regards disarmament, he disclosed that orders had been issued for the surrender of all armaments in excess of treaty limitations and that the delivery of such materials was

proceeding. The necessary arrangements had been made by the *Länder* for the disarmament of the irregular military organizations (Einwohnerwehr and Or-gesch), and even the Bavarian government was complying. Aware that the Poles and their allies would be only too happy to find a pretext for vindicating their attacks upon Upper Silesia, Wirth confessed that the central government had been forced to discourage the inalienable right of self-defense. Legitimate resort to arms might be construed as an infraction of the disarmament clauses. Nevertheless, in spite of the evident efforts of some foreign statesmen to discourage the present German ministry, the chancellor said that the cabinet would persevere in building a peaceable democracy and would do its utmost to assist in the reconstruction of Europe. He again reminded the Allies of the wisdom of treating a democratic German government better than the old imperial regime.

The S.P.D. viewed the question of participation in the Wirth government almost entirely from the standpoint of international affairs. A revived optimism had seized the Majority Socialists, and they were now pressing the government more vigorously than ever to do its utmost to carry out the London demands. As Wels said, "everything that might facilitate the fulfilment of unfulfillable conditions must be done."³⁹ He ingenuously told the reichstag that if Germany fulfilled the terms of the ultimatum, there would be no reason to fear a French invasion of the Ruhr. Clearly, the Majority Socialists believed that acceptance of the ultimatum had helped to relieve the tension. With the exception of a small minority who remained distantly

³⁷ Hugo F. SIMON, *Reparation und Wiederaufbau* (Berlin, 1925), p. 100.

³⁸ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (June 1, 1921), 3709-17.

³⁹ See his speech in *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (June 2, 1921), 3722-29.

critical of Wirth's foreign policy, the great majority of the S.P.D. believed that for Germany the long night of intimidation was at last yielding to the dawn of understanding.⁴⁰

While aware that France aspired to shine militarily, the S.P.D. nonetheless thought that it detected signs of a return to reason in that country. French capitalists would soon be forced to admit that it was bad business to smash Germany's economy and that no integral part of Europe could be crippled without imperiling the whole. The majority of the party, of course, entertained no thought of effecting a bilateral understanding with France to the exclusion of England. Wels, on behalf of the executive committee, had flatly rejected this program, which was advocated by Max Cohen and Ludwig Quessel. "We Social Democrats," said Wels, "are opponents of a so-called 'continental' policy which would unite all the people of the continent against the English. We do not need to say how much store we Social Democrats set by good relations with England."⁴¹ Optimistic reliance upon Lloyd George's ministry was in fact so prevalent in Majority Socialist circles that the *Neue Zeit* had to caution its readers against thinking that the British prime minister had become a Germanophile.⁴² Such an assumption could lead only to bitter disillusionment. On the other hand, warned the editors, it was impossible for the S.P.D. to ignore the truth that the future of Europe ultimately de-

pended upon the willingness of France and Germany to co-operate.

Although the Wirth government piled up evidence of its intention to carry out the Treaty of Versailles and the London ultimatum,⁴³ Germany's energetic performance won no concrete recognition from the Allied governments. On June 2 Friedrich Rosen, the foreign minister, complained to the British ambassador, Lord d'Abernon: "We have done marvelous things towards carrying out the ultimatum, but we have got very little in exchange."⁴⁴ He asked whether something could not be done to lift the military sanctions of March 8 (i.e., occupation of Düsseldorf, Ruhrort, etc.) or to insure the retention of Upper Silesia. Rosen feared that unless the government's tangible achievements secured better recognition from abroad, the Wirth cabinet would be overthrown. He pointed out that a German People's party government in the Reich would be a calamity, for foreign policy would then be in the hands of those interests least devoted to carrying out the London schedules. Lord d'Abernon was impressed and he subsequently appealed to the prime minister, but Lloyd George made excuses and procrastinated. The Italian ambassador to Berlin, Alfredo Frassati, also impressed upon his government the necessity for concessions to Germany, especially in the matter of Upper Silesia. He had written the Italian

⁴⁰ The attitude of the S.P.D. minority is given by L. QUESEL, "Deutschlands aussenpolitisches Programm," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVI (1921), 489-90.

⁴¹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCXLIX (June 2, 1921), 3729.

⁴² HEINRICH CUNOW, "Lloyd Georges Kontinentalpolitik und die oberschlesische Frage," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX (1921), 245-46.

⁴³ Very early in the history of the Wirth cabinet the British ambassador to Berlin commented: "Events here have moved very fast and, in regard to reparations, most satisfactorily. Since the vote in the Reichstag on May 10 and the installation of Wirth as chancellor, the German government have shown not only good faith but almost alacrity in carrying out their obligations in respect of disarmament and reparations. More progress has been made in a fortnight under Wirth than in a year under Fehrenbach and Simons" (LORD D'ABERNON, *The diary of an ambassador* [New York, 1931], I, 183).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

foreign minister, Count Carlo Sforza, that an adverse decision for Germany in the Polish dispute would mean the end of the Wirth government and a setback for the cause of general pacification.⁴⁵

In an address before the reichstag on June 30 Rosen expressed his regrets that the French premier, Aristide Briand, had spoken against the removal of sanctions.⁴⁶ The foreign minister reported that he had instructed the German ambassador in Paris, Wilhelm Mayer, to stress emphatically that, after the acceptance of the ultimatum and the noteworthy achievements of Germany toward fulfilment, the maintenance of these forcible measures was a harsh injustice. But Briand had given Mayer the enigmatic answer that, in his opinion, sanctions could not be lifted at this time. Yet, protested Rosen, even Count Sforza had admitted that the continuation of sanctions was unjustified. The viewpoint of England, as conveyed by Lord Curzon to the German ambassador, Friedrich Sthamer, was that, since the sanctions had been imposed in joint conference of the Allied powers, they could be lifted only by the same authority. This threw the decision again into the lap of France, which was feigning fear of the handful of irregular formations in Germany and would not hear of any relaxation in sanctions. Lord Curzon had advised that, pending the next conference, the German government do everything in its power to execute the conditions of the ultimatum. For his benefit Rosen stated: "We are in agreement . . . in our resolve loyally to fulfil the ultimatum and to comply with it in full measure. I deem it necessary to tell the world once again, however, that Germany has punctually

fulfilled all the terms . . . set forth in the ultimatum—whether relating to disarmament or to reparations deliveries." The delivery of one milliard gold marks in the single month of May, said Rosen, should have convinced the ex-foe of Germany's good faith. Also, in spite of the greatest difficulties, Germany had scrupulously observed the time limit on dissolving the self-defense formations and on surrendering armaments.

The *Vorwärts* corroborated Rosen's claims. It confirmed the statement that even the disarmament demand had been fulfilled and on time.⁴⁷ In the reichstag, Deputy Wilhelm Sollmann gave the formal endorsement of the S.P.D., saying that Germany had, in the main, fulfilled its treaty obligations.⁴⁸ He thought it niggardly of France to be so exacting about compliance with the letter of its demands. "To be sure," he said, "our party favors the dissolution of the illegal military formations. But as a Rhenish Socialist I believe I can speak plainly: Even were the illegal military organizations in Germany to continue—and I do not wish this—they would constitute no threat to the vast army of occupation which the Entente has at the Rhine." A week later Wilhelm Keil (S.P.D.) reiterated the demand that sanctions be lifted.⁴⁹

While the governments of France and Germany were stalemated, the new minister of reconstruction, Walther Rathenau, was quietly striving to reach an agreement with the captains of French industry. Like the leaders of the Socialist

⁴⁷ *Vorwärts*, July 1, 1921.

⁴⁸ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCL (June 30, 1921), 4243-47; cf. H. FEHLINGER, "Abrüstung oder neue Kriegsrüstung?" *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX (1921), 289-93.

⁴⁹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCL (July 6, 1921), 4481-85. The chancellor made similar remarks at Breslau on July 8 (*Schulthess* [1921], Part I, p. 240).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁶ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCL (June 30, 1921), 4241-43.

parties, Rathenau sought to win understanding abroad for the true plight and attitude of Germany.⁵⁰ In the cabinet he spoke for those who inclined toward the United States for succor, just as Rosen favored the English orientation and Adolf Maltzan, chief of the eastern division in the foreign office, urged a pro-Russian policy. Although Rathenau placed the chief stress upon winning the support of Wall Street for converting the reparations problem into an international financial operation, he did not neglect to approach France directly. During the summer and early autumn of 1921 he negotiated with the French industrialist and minister of the liberated regions, Louis Loucheur. On October 6 the two men reached a *modus vivendi* at Wiesbaden.

Meanwhile, the official Anglo-American orientation received new encouragement from Washington and London.⁵¹ In August a less objectionable peace treaty was signed between the United States and Germany, while at an inter-Allied conference in September, Lloyd George constituted himself the champion of the German cause in Upper Silesia. Germany's international relations seemed so improved by early September that Wirth could declare in a speech in Berlin that the policy inaugurated on May 10 had calmed the political atmosphere.⁵² On this occasion he besought the electorate to have faith in a cabinet that was beginning to produce results. Lord d'Aber-

non, too, lent encouragement. He recognized that Germany was supplementing conciliatory words with abstention from acts that would antagonize England.⁵³

The Wirth government seemed to have scored a great success at Wiesbaden.⁵⁴ Rathenau was very optimistic over his agreement with Loucheur. Yet it may be questioned whether such optimism was warranted. Rathenau had not secured the removal of either economic or military sanctions. The only favorable modification won from Loucheur was the limitation of substantive deliveries to a maximum value of seven milliard gold marks by May 1, 1926 or one milliard gold marks per year.⁵⁵ Whether this was a concession from France to Germany or the other way around is debatable. Loucheur was afraid that the French economy could not stand a greater influx of German goods, and he feared that a labor crisis would result from larger deliveries in kind. For Germany the best aspect of Wiesbaden was that as a "free agreement" it was a propitious departure in Franco-German relations. The opposition within the S.P.D. felt that its policy was at last being put into effect. Max Cohen wrote: "The Wirth cabinet is the first German government that has both expressed and demonstrated a real will to achieve maximum fulfilment. It has done what we [the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* group] have regarded as self-evident. It has initiated closer co-operation with the state that has suffered most

⁵⁰ Hugo SIMON, *Aus Rathenaus Leben* (Dresden, 1927), p. 23.

⁵¹ Socialist attitudes toward this development may be traced in Max SCHIPPEL, "Valutaend, Reparationen und Amerika," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVII (1921), 585-89; L. QUESSEL, "Gross Britannien und das europäische Festland," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVII (1921), 651-55; and J. STEINER-JULLIEN, "Die Auslandspolitik im Parteiprogramm," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX (1921), 593-99.

⁵² D'ABERNON, I, 220.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ See Erwin BARTH, "Das Wiesbaden Abkommen," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1921), 82; and Arthur HEICHEN, "Zum Wiesbadener Abkommen," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1921), 149-52.

⁵⁵ Rathenau himself assumed that the deliveries in goods would never go above half that amount (Rathenau to Lord d'Abernon, Sept. 27, 1921, Walther RATHENAU, *Politische Briefe* [Dresden, 1929], p. 312).

damage and is most interested in reparations: France."⁵⁶

But the Socialists were congratulating themselves too soon. Just as the Wirth government was managing to create the illusion of success, it suffered a major setback in Upper Silesia. The League of Nations subcommittee decreed the partition of that region, with the bulk of the mines and industries assigned to Poland. Wirth was chagrined. In a cabinet session of October 12 he remarked hotly that the League decision was one of black injustice and warned that it would not serve the interests of future peace.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, his policy did not deviate from the rectilinear. He did not give ear to the Nationalists, who were saying that a new situation had been created by the loss of part of Upper Silesia and that Germany was no longer under obligation to carry out the London schedules and the Wiesbaden agreement. The chancellor shared the Socialist view that the Allies would be able to say with some justification that the partition of Upper Silesia constituted no ground for a German refusal to discharge obligations that were originally assumed without reservation. The Socialists had come to trust him, and they protested that not Wirth but Ludendorff was responsible for the loss of Upper Silesia. Thus, the *Vorwärts* urged the reichstag to adopt a resolution declaring that there was no reason for denying confidence to the cabinet,⁵⁸ and this position was endorsed by the S.P.D. reichstag group and by the party executive committee.⁵⁹

On October 21 the Allied ambassador-

⁵⁶ "Der politische Sinn des Görlicher Beschlusses," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVII (1921), 866.

⁵⁷ *Vorwärts*, Oct. 13, 1921.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 21 and 22, 1921.

al conference transmitted its final word on Upper Silesia to Mayer in Paris.⁶⁰ The fact that the Allied decision was more favorable than it would have been if the line proposed by the French and Poles had been adopted escaped the German people in their great grief over the loss of the region awarded to Poland. The popular view was that a promise had been broken and the principle of self-determination defiled. Neither the national nor the Prussian government could countenance this travesty of justice by remaining in office.⁶¹ In his letter of resignation of the 22d the chancellor bitterly lamented that the Allies had shown no appreciation of the fact that his government had pursued loyal fulfilment for six months.⁶²

Wirth was forced to resign as a gesture of protest against the loss of part of Upper Silesia, but he was almost immediately returned at the head of a new cabinet. In spite of the fact that powerful persons in the bourgeois camp were personally hostile to him, his policy was felt to be the only one practicable. The U.S.P.D. rallied to his support because it was convinced that the chancellor had carried out the pledge of fulfilment which he had made in May. Indeed, Wirth had become the darling of the U.S.P.D., and nothing illustrates this so well as the party's defense of his policies against all attack or curtailment. The U.S.P.D. also resisted a campaign to broaden the cabinet by including representatives from the party of "big business," the D.V.P. Such an attempt was made when the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 21, 1921.

⁶¹ *Schulthess* (1921), Part I, p. 292. The Stegerwald ministry in Prussia retired on November 10 and was succeeded by Otto Braun's first cabinet of the "Great Coalition" (i.e., S.P.D., Democrats, Center, and D.V.P.) (Otto BRAUN, *Von Weimar zu Hitler* [New York, 1940], p. 113).

⁶² *Vorwärts*, Oct. 23, 1921.

Majority Socialists at their Görlitz convention (September 17-24, 1921) had cleared the way for the "nationalization" of official foreign policy by inviting the D.V.P. to join a cabinet of fulfilment.⁶³ Even the opposition within the S.P.D. applauded this step,⁶⁴ but the Independent Socialist organ, the *Freiheit*, had no confidence in the good faith of the industrialists and financiers, and it denounced the Görlitz declaration as a stab in the back of the Wirth government.⁶⁵

Wirth's second cabinet had rough sledding from the outset. The D.V.P. had refused the Majority Socialists' overtures, and the new cabinet was one based merely upon the Center and the S.P.D.⁶⁶ It had to battle for a majority from day to day on the reichstag floor. Had it not been for the support of the U.S.P.D., the new government would have been stillborn.

In his first appearance before the reichstag, following the cabinet crisis, Wirth categorically condemned the Upper Silesian edict as unjust and founded on coercion.⁶⁷ He repeatedly said that the whole arbitrary procedure had been

a multiple violation of the peace treaty and asserted that his government felt that the decisions of the ambassadorial conference in no way prejudiced ancient German rights to Upper Silesia. Alluding to the fact that 77.5 per cent of the region's coal production had been given to Poland, the chancellor declared that he considered the loss of Upper Silesian resources a heavier blow to the country's prosperity than all the other territorial clauses of the treaty put together.

In turn, the Majority Socialist leader, Hermann Müller, urged the nation to support the foreign policy of the Wirth cabinet.⁶⁸ He declared that any other government would ultimately be forced to follow the same policy. Müller agreed that Germany would henceforth have great difficulty in fulfilling the demands of the London ultimatum. But he did not retreat from the view that the policy of maximum fulfilment was the only practical one and that it would have to be maintained. He expressed the hope that in the future good relations might be restored with Poland. That country must not be a wall shutting off Germany from the east, said Müller, but a bridge to Soviet Russia. In this view Rudolf Breitscheid concurred.⁶⁹ He, too, condemned a boundary decision that conformed neither to the economic nor to the geographic needs of Upper Silesia and that flouted the inalienable rights of the residents.⁷⁰

The second Wirth government survived its first test in the reichstag by a vote of 230 to 130 with 9 abstentions,⁷¹

⁶³ *Schulthess* (1921), Part I, p. 267. On the convention see Carl SEVERING, "Ein Wort zum deutschen Sozialdemokratischen Parteitag 1921," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVII (1921), 785-88; Max SCHIPPEL, "Dreissig Jahre Erfurter Programm," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVII (1921), 788-93; COHEN, "Der politische Sinn . . .," *loc. cit.*, pp. 865-69; Otto WELS, "Zum Parteitag," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIX (1921), 577-82; J. STEINER-JULLIEN, "Die Auslands politik . . .," *loc. cit.*, pp. 593-99; Heinrich CUNOW, "Die geschichtliche Bedeutung des Erfurter Parteitags," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1921), 25-30; and *Vorwärts*, Sept. 17-25, 1921.

⁶⁴ COHEN, "Der politische Sinn . . .," *loc. cit.*, p. 869.

⁶⁵ Sept. 24-26, 1921.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Schulthess* (1921), Part I, p. 296.

⁶⁷ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLI (Oct. 26, 1921), 4733-36. With this view the British ambassador sympathized (D'ABERNON, I 230)

⁶⁸ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLI (Oct. 26, 1921), 4736-39.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4753-60.

⁷⁰ For more Socialist opinion see Heinrich LÖFFLER, "Oberschlesien," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1921), 124-29; and Julius FRANZ, "Die Zukunft Oberschlesiens," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1921), 143-49.

⁷¹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLI (Dec. 16, 1921), 4781.

but thereafter its fortunes rapidly declined. On December 16 the chancellor told the main committee of the house that the government's recent appeal of November 19 for an international loan had been rejected by English financiers.⁷² Bankers of the City took the view that Germany's obligations under the London ultimatum were so vast and indefinite as to exclude the extension of either long- or short-term credits. With this view Wirth could hardly differ; but it now became his sad duty to announce that Germany had been obliged to request a moratorium on its next two instalments of five hundred million gold marks (January 15, 1922) and two hundred and fifty million gold marks (February 15). The chancellor had struck his flag with heavy heart, and even in the hour of defeat he exhorted the deputies to pass tax legislation that would enable Germany to meet greater obligations in the future.

The *Vorwärts* was not inclined to exaggerate the seriousness of the situation created by the government's request for a moratorium. It was not a case of intentional default. "The objective impossibility of fulfilment," said the editors, "was stronger than the subjective will to fulfil."⁷³ "Fair-minded circles in Entente countries and in America," wrote Hermann Müller, "must admit that the Wirth cabinet has pursued an upright policy and that this policy has been supported by the Social Democrats with their whole power."⁷⁴ Less sanguine was

the view of Walther Rathenau, who was soon to become the German foreign minister. He confided to Lord d'Abernon that "he did not believe that France would agree to any real settlement until Raymond Poincaré had been in office and had failed."⁷⁵

Wirth's announcement occasioned a meeting of the Allied Supreme Council in early January at Cannes. Although the Socialists did not believe that the French could legally invoke sanctions on pretext of default, Rathenau, who headed the German delegation at Cannes, was convinced that they would try. He expected, however, to enlist British support against the French, because he thought that the English would welcome the opportunity to embarrass the French. If he should again be disillusioned, a new possibility loomed upon the horizon: an understanding with Soviet Russia. Nikolaievich Krestinski, commercial representative of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, had taken up offices in Berlin in November 1921,⁷⁶ and a number of influential Germans, among whom were Baron Adolf Maltzan and General Hans von Seeckt, commander-in-chief of the reichswehr, had been negotiating for some kind of pact with Soviet officials. Persons like Maltzan and Seeckt realized that the maintenance of a wall between Germany and Russia could only redound to the advantage of France.⁷⁷ They strove unobtrusively for an arrangement with Russia at the same time that Rathenau was attempting more openly to impress the English and

⁷² *Schulthess* (1921), Part I, p. 336.

⁷³ *Vorwärts*, Dec. 16, 1921. The Majority Socialists believed that Briand would take no radical step against Germany but would continue to follow a cautiously pragmatic policy, in spite of the growing strength of the National bloc in the chamber of deputies. See J. STEINER-JULLIEN, "Briand," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1921), 265-68; Julius KALISKI, "Die deutsche Politik am Beginn des 4. Nachkriegsjahr," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVIII (1922), 15-22.

⁷⁴ *Vorwärts*, Jan. 1, 1922.

⁷⁵ D'ABERNON, I, 247-48.

⁷⁶ *Schulthess* (1921), Part I, p. 319.

⁷⁷ Friedrich von RABENAU, *Seeckt: aus seinem Leben, 1918-36. Unter Verwendung des schriftlichen Nachlasses im Auftrage von Frau Dorothea von Seeckt* (Leipzig, 1940), p. 308; Edgar von SCHMIDT-PAULI, *General von Seeckt: Lebensbild eines deutschen Soldaten* (Berlin, 1937), p. 109.

the French with Germany's need for relief.

Rathenau cannot be said to have failed at Cannes, for the German government was granted a partial moratorium. It was required to pay a smaller sum—thirty-one million gold marks—every ten days after January 18 until the Reparations Commission had investigated the Reich's financial plight or until a definite settlement had been reached. The German government was to submit a program for paying reparations in cash and kind during the year 1922 and, in addition, a new plan for the reform of the tax system and the stabilization of the mark.

The Majority Socialists believed that the invitation to Germany to present recommendations at the forthcoming Genoa conference augured better days ahead, and they applauded Rathenau's elevation to the post of foreign minister on January 31, 1922.⁷⁸ They were not unduly alarmed by the change of cabinets that had occurred in France while the Cannes conference was in session. The view prevailed in S.P.D. circles that the advent of Poincaré and the Nationalists would not and could not mean a radical break with the policy pursued by Poincaré's predecessor.⁷⁹ It was understood, to be sure, that Poincaré would seek to exploit every situation for the advantage of France and the suppression of Germany, but consolation was found in the fact that he was tied by myriad commitments—by past moves made on the chessboard of international politics. The *Vorwärts* was mindful of this when it stated that the Wirth government desired as much to co-operate with Poin-

caré as with Briand.⁸⁰ Both S.P.D. and U.S.P.D., in fact, rejected the idea that now was the time to repudiate obligations. Both recognized the serious needs of France and realized that the policy of conciliation must be directed not toward persons but toward peoples.

The idyll of Cannes was out of season. Wirth's unflagging efforts to recapture French confidence failed. Under Poincaré, France resumed that policy, only slightly abated after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which Foch and Clemenceau had followed during the war and at the Peace Conference: the dismemberment and suppression of Germany. France prepared to inflict new political, economic, and military sanctions and to enforce rigidly its every right or presumed right by a strict interpretation of the treaty.

Wirth told the reichstag on January 26 that he regretted the advent of Poincaré, which he felt to be a step backward, but declared that the German government would continue its quest for an understanding.⁸¹ The chancellor confessed that he was shocked at Poincaré's remark before the chamber of deputies that Germany must finally "*begin*" to carry out its obligations. Since the London ultimatum, protested Wirth, Germany had paid one milliard one hundred and eight million gold marks in cash and the equivalent of four hundred and twenty million gold marks in substantive deliveries. Furthermore, varied and extraordinary deliveries amounting to many milliards had been made before the time of the London ultimatum. "When Poincaré charges that Germany has performed nothing," said Wirth vehemently, "he makes a false assertion."

⁷⁸ *Vorwärts*, Feb. 2, 1922.

⁷⁹ J. STEINER-JULLIEN, "Von Cannes zu Poincaré," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1922), 412.

⁸⁰ *Vorwärts*, Jan. 13, 1922.

⁸¹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLII (Jan. 26, 1922), 5557-63.

German strategy under Wirth and Rathenau was emphatically and frequently to affirm Germany's willingness to pay to the limit of its ability and then in conferences to demonstrate that that limit was lower than Allied experts thought. There was no scope for originality in this strategy, but few persons were better qualified to conduct it than Rathenau, who enjoyed rare personal prestige abroad and who was, besides, highly regarded by Lord d'Abernon. Unfortunately, the foreign minister was hampered by heavy attacks at home. Big business regarded him as a renegade because of his unorthodox economic theories, while the Nationalists and militarists made mean attacks upon his Jewish ancestry. If Rathenau's presence in the foreign office was an asset in dealing with foreign powers, in domestic politics it was a liability.

As the Genoa conference drew near, clouds of discouragement began to gather over the Wilhelmstrasse. In March 1922 the English were again growing indecisive and were reported to have no statesman-like plan to introduce at the forthcoming conference.⁸² The United States was holding itself aloof from Europe's squabbles. Against these facts, the knowledge that Maltzan and Seeckt were making progress in their conversations with the Russians offered small consolation, for most informed persons in Germany regarded Russia as too weak and detached to offer a counterweight to a hostile western entente. Besides, Rathenau and a majority of the ministers much preferred a western orientation. German spirits were further depressed by the actions of the French, who appeared to be seeking to provoke Germany to some desperate act of defiance so that they would have a pretext for wrecking any

scheme to revise the reparations schedules. Rathenau confided to Lord d'Abernon on March 14 that he "was driven wild by the perpetual notes of the French embassy regarding this and that supposed default of the German government."⁸³ They came in an unending stream, in two months a total of one hundred and ten, touching on every conceivable phase of Germany's obligations.⁸⁴ The clarity and resolution of French aims stood in sharp contrast with the wild schemes of the Bolsheviks, the indecision of England, and the indifference of the United States. This fact lent considerable color to the familiar charge of the opposition Socialists that England, the United States, and Soviet Russia would do nothing for Germany.⁸⁵

When Wirth next appeared before the reichstag, on March 28, it was to tell the deputies that the Reparations Commission had just transmitted a particularly irritating note.⁸⁶ On March 21 the commission had demanded that the German government prepare without delay a plan for increasing taxes to a point where they would yield for the fiscal year 1922-23 a sum not less than sixty milliard paper marks in excess of current receipts. This new tax must be certified and enacted by May 31, and provision must be made to raise forty milliard paper marks before the end of 1922. When the house heard these demands, there were cries of "Ridiculous!" Wirth explained that the

⁸³ *Ibid.*; p. 291.

⁸⁴ SIMON, *Reparation und Wiederaufbau*, p. 136.

⁸⁵ See MAX COHEN, "Wie kommen wir wieder in die Höhe?" *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVIII (1922), 255; but cf. the defense of official policy in Arthur HEICHEN, "Was will England in Genua?" *Neue Zeit*, XL (1922), 457-60; and J. STEINER-JULLIEN, "Die amerikanische Offensive," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1922), 601-4.

⁸⁶ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLIII (Mar. 28, 1922), 6613-22.

⁸² D'ABERNON, I, 281.

schedule of payments set forth in the note actually represented a considerable reduction in Germany's obligations for 1922. Even the commission had been forced publicly to recognize that the London schedules had proved impossible. Thus, payments for the expiring fiscal year were reduced from three milliard two hundred million gold marks in cash and kind to seven hundred and twenty million gold marks in cash and one milliard four hundred and fifty million gold marks in substantive deliveries. This was precisely what Rathenau had asked at Cannes. Unfortunately, the fourth clause underlined the uncertain and provisional nature of the whole arrangement. It made the agreement depend upon enactment of the specified tax law by May 31. The chancellor observed: "After thorough discussion the government has declared this [the demand for sixty milliard in additional taxes] to be a completely impossible condition—an unreasonable demand." He said that taxes could not be pyramided without limit but must be in proportion to the national income. Germany would have to have relief for 1922 from all cash reparations, else the whole artificial reparations system might crash.

The *Vorwärts* described the contemplated exactions of the Reparations Commission as a new attack upon the mark. "The first result of this debasement will be to scrap the German budget and to make the tax law, which is almost drafted, illusory."⁸⁷ In the reichstag Friedrich Stampfer, editor of the S.P.D. central organ, inveighed against the peremptory tone and outrageous impositions of the Reparations Commission.⁸⁸ The view of the Majority Social-

ists, in general, was that, precisely because the Wirth government had championed the policy of honorable fulfilment, it was now entitled to express the demand, stemming from the entire nation, for rejection of the note. For its part, the U.S.P.D. hedged. Breitscheid declared that the Independents had been dismayed by the note, but at the same time he reminded the reichstag that the figures set forth in the *démarche* did constitute some improvement over those in the London ultimatum.⁸⁹ Certainly the note offered no excuse for the reprehensible reaction of sections of the bourgeois press and even of the foreign ministry.⁹⁰ Breitscheid admitted that Germany could not raise sixty milliard paper marks in new taxes within the time specified but observed that the underlying premise of the commission's demand was sound. The tax compromise recommended by the cabinet was certainly insufficient. Indeed, Breitscheid threatened that the U.S.P.D. would withdraw its support from the government unless the latter revised the tax law. In that case the administration might have to rely upon the parties of the Right, which, while they might endorse the government's financial views, would certainly sabotage the policy of fulfilment.

In the dreary procession of capitulations the nation yearned for one courageous "No!" This came on March 30, when the reichstag approved the government's fiscal proposals and endorsed Wirth's rejection of the demands of the Reparations Commission. The vote was 248 to 81 with 43 abstentions.⁹¹ Tradi-

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, CCCLIV (Mar. 29, 1922), 6657-65.

⁹⁰ Cf. Rathenau's speech, *ibid.*, pp. 6651-57.

⁹¹ *Vorwärts*, Mar. 31, 1922. The British ambassador wrote on March 30: "The worst blunder was to demand from the German government—who have just passed a scheme of taxation for the country—a large additional increase of taxation. This demand

⁸⁷ *Vorwärts*, Mar. 29, 1922.

⁸⁸ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLIII (Mar. 28, 1922), 6632-33.

tional party lines were somewhat deranged in the voting because of ideological or partisan considerations. Thus the S.P.D. found itself in company with the D.V.P. in endorsing rejection, while the U.S.P.D., in a dilemma, refrained from voting. Commenting on the results of the voting, the *Vorwärts* applauded the chancellor's defense of Germany's last shred of sovereignty. But the editors sought to avoid a bad impression abroad by insisting that the government was anxious to renew negotiations for a compromise.⁹²

On April 10, 1922 the Genoa conference convened.⁹³ From the outset all discussion of the peace treaties, disarmament, and reparation was excluded from the agenda by the insistence of M. Barthou, head of the French delegation.⁹⁴ This removed one of the main reasons for calling the conference and smothered German expectations. Poincaré had decided in favor of open war and had deliberately absented himself from the sessions. He had instructed Barthou to play the role of obstructionist and to veto any suggestions that Germany be admitted to the League Council.⁹⁵

From the German Socialist standpoint the most notable feature of the conference was the presence of a Russian delegation. This fact aroused hopes that trade relations with Russia might be restored. Such a development could not fail to benefit German industry and Eu-

ropean economy in general.⁹⁶ Both the S.P.D. and U.S.P.D. desired the universal diplomatic recognition of Russia and the early re-establishment of the bridge between Moscow and Berlin. The S.P.D., however, was not completely free to give play to its Russian policy because, as a government party, it had to be guided in part by what the Center wanted; and the latter did not relish the prospect of a Bolshevik embassy in Berlin.

On Easter Sunday, April 16, 1922, a treaty was signed between the Russian and German delegations at Rapallo, not far distant from Genoa. Credit for this treaty goes to Baron Maltzan and General Seeckt, who, as has been noted, had been preparing the ground for some time for a *rapprochement* with Moscow.⁹⁷ The pact contained no military clauses or articles of alliance and provided for no more than the mutual resumption of diplomatic relations, bilateral renunciation of all reparations claims, and the establishment of trade relations between Germany and Russia.⁹⁸

In general, the Socialist press was relieved to find that Genoa had not resulted in another "dictate." Yet on the Left there was caustic criticism of Rapallo.⁹⁹ Many Socialists feared that the Allies would think a political compact existed between the Reich and So-

⁹⁶ *Vorwärts*, Apr. 9, 1921; and *Freiheit*, Apr. 9 and 10, 1921.

⁹⁷ RABENAU, p. 309. Lord d'Abernon reproduces a series of secret German memoranda leading up to the signing of the Russo-German treaty, which are "probably authentic" and in which Maltzan figures prominently. Maltzan's testimony in 1926 strengthens the supposition that he was a decisive force in the negotiations (D'ABERNON, I, 311-34). Strangely enough, General Seeckt, who was at a birthday celebration at the time of the signing of the pact, was surprised by its announcement (RABENAU, p. 312).

⁹⁸ Text in *Vorwärts*, Apr. 18, 1922.

⁹⁹ E.g., the reports in *Vorwärts*, Apr. 18, 19, and 20, 1922.

was so extravagant that no German government could possibly accede to it. The tone of the note was also such as to ensure a maximum of opposition" (D'ABERNON, I, 300).

⁹² *Vorwärts*, Mar. 31, 1922.

⁹³ On Genoa see Harry KESSLER, *Walther Rathenau, sein Leben und sein Werk* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 326-51.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁹⁵ D'ABERNON, I, 305 n.

viet Russia and that, in any case, Rapallo would strongly prejudice Germany's efforts to win a reduction in reparations. Certainly the reaction of the French press fed these fears.¹⁰⁰ Ebert himself was perturbed. He considered the move of the German delegation theatrical and dangerous.¹⁰¹ The first reaction of the *Vorwärts* was thinly veiled bewilderment.¹⁰² It recognized the apprehension that the treaty had evoked in some Socialist circles but declared that "in this situation feelings must not determine our course." Relying upon an old political bromide, the editors prescribed confidence: "We must, for the present, assume that our accredited representatives in Genoa acted honorably and in the interest of Germany, even though they incurred the risk that France may use this opportunity to indulge in a new press campaign against us." The editors added nervously that Rapallo should be followed by similar treaties between the Entente and Russia.

The sharpest criticism of Rapallo came from the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. It charged that, in signing a treaty with Communist Russia, Germany had placed itself in the hire of England, which wished only to divide the continent.¹⁰³ Although the opposition Majority Socialists did not believe that the treaty contained any secret political or military clauses and though they conceded that the government had signed with "honor-

able intent," they expressed the opinion that the Wirth-Rathenau-Bauer cabinet had simply allowed itself to be hoodwinked by the English. "Rapallo may well serve the interests of Bolshevism and England," wrote Ludwig Quessel, "but for Germany it will bring no improvement in its European position." Likewise, Julius Kaliski, the journal's economic expert, asserted that Rapallo had benefited only Soviet Russia and Britain.¹⁰⁴ He declared that France was justified in condemning the treaty, that France's attitude best conformed with the true interests of the continent, and that Europe would benefit from an overthrow of the Bolsheviki.

The U.S.P.D. was almost embarrassed by the pact with Russia. Although the party had been striving for just such an agreement for three years, it now betrayed certain misgivings. The *Freiheit* approved the principle of Rapallo but deplored the manner in which the pact had been negotiated and the suspect schemes with which it was linked. The journal warned that the U.S.P.D. would resist any efforts of the Right to exploit the treaty for political and military purposes.¹⁰⁵ The *Vorwärts*, for its part, had recovered its bearings a day after the treaty was announced. It rejected as "silliness" the assertion that the German delegation had intended to create a new political constellation unfavorable to the Entente. "For such a policy," said the editors, "the government would find no majority in the reichstag; nor would the reichstag ratify a treaty concluded in such a spirit." The way in which the Entente had received the treaty merely served to show, said the

¹⁰⁰ See the *Temps*, Apr. 18, 1922; the report of Poincaré's attack of April 24 against the German government (*ibid.*, Apr. 25, 1922); and L. DUMONT-WILDEN, "La coalition germano-russe," *Revue politique et littéraire*, LX (1922), 278-81.

¹⁰¹ STAMPFER, p. 250.

¹⁰² *Vorwärts*, Apr. 18, 1922.

¹⁰³ Ludwig QUESSEL, "Ein Blick auf Genua," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVIII (1922), 385-91, and "Ein Rückblick auf Genua," *ibid.*, pp. 486-92.

¹⁰⁴ "Deutsch-russischer Vertrag," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, LVIII (1922), 455.

¹⁰⁵ *Freiheit*, Apr. 18, 19, and 26, and May 30, 1922.

Vorwärts, that the air was still surcharged with distrust.¹⁰⁶

The *Neue Zeit*, oracle of the S.P.D. executive committee, applauded Rapallo.¹⁰⁷ "One can understand the anger and indignation of the Allies over the 'dishonesty' and 'duplicity' of the Russians and Germans—especially the Germans," wrote Heinrich Cunow. "They [the Allies] were hoisted with their own petard." In another article Cunow said that the critics of Rapallo did not realize what would have been the consequences for Germany had Lloyd George's plan prevailed.¹⁰⁸ It would have made Russia an object of exploitation by an international consortium of British, Belgian, and French entrepreneurs, while Germany would have been forced to accommodate itself to the wretched role of the Allies' factotum in dealings with the Soviets. Cunow also praised Rapallo for having blocked the scheme to add another power to the list of Germany's creditors under the peace treaty and declared: "Even the growing isolation of France can be entered as a favorable result for Germany from the Genoa conference; for the diminution of France's influence and the deterioration of its position in the concert of world powers is one of the most important preconditions for the return of Europe to a state of political and economic stability." With small regard for consistency in the party line, Cunow declared, in conclusion, that Genoa had prepared the way for a new grouping of the powers in Europe.

The definitive positions of the Socialist parties toward the Treaty of Rapallo were stated by the party spokesmen on the floor of the reichstag near the end of

May. Hermann Müller said that the S.P.D. had long favored good relations with Russia and that, therefore, the contents of the treaty met with the party's approval.¹⁰⁹ He admitted, nonetheless, that his friends "had certain mental reservations regarding the timing of the treaty and the manner in which it was concluded." The circumstances under which the agreement had been signed rather than the text itself had somewhat impaired Germany's reputation. But when all was said, the S.P.D. hailed Rapallo because it was a real peace treaty, unlike Brest Litovsk and Versailles, and because it ushered in an era of stable and friendly relations with Russia. Müller took pains to emphasize the fact that the pact would not conflict with the policy of fulfilment. Although the French government, under the sway of the implacable Poincaré, was still obstructing an understanding, the S.P.D. continued to believe "that an accord between the French and German people is essential if Europe is to be spared another catastrophe such as it has experienced during the last five years." Rejecting the rumor that a secret military agreement had been signed with Russia, Müller closed by pleading for the solidarity of nations and especially for the friendship of Britain. The Reich, he promised, would make no trouble for the British Empire, and the latter would find in the German republic a loyal co-worker for the maintenance of peace.

Speaking for the Independent Socialists, Arthur Crispien recalled that it had always been the Right that had embarrassed efforts to treat with Russia.¹¹⁰ Yet, paradoxically, it was the Right—the German Nationalists and the D.V.P.

¹⁰⁶ Apr. 19, 1922.

¹⁰⁷ XL (1922), 162-63.

¹⁰⁸ "Epilog zur Genueser Tragikomödie," *Neue Zeit*, XL (1922), 193-99.

¹⁰⁹ *Reichstagsverhandlungen*, CCCLV (May 29, 1922), 7677-82.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7713-18.

—that was most jubilant over Rapallo. Crispian was unwilling to believe that Wirth himself wanted to give the treaty a militaristic twist. "But," said he, "we know that other forces are at work in Germany, forces that have erected an auxiliary government, and we know also that the present government has not hitherto succeeded in coping with this collateral setup." While such a person as Andreas Hermes remained in Wirth's cabinet, linking it with circles of high finance, said Crispian, the U.S.P.D. could not give the government its unqualified support. Crispian also alluded to the unseemly applause that had greeted the Treaty of Rapallo in Moscow. It began to look as if even Leon Trotsky, the Russian commissar for war, was expecting extravagant things from the working of the agreement. All these signs were disturbing to the Independents and drove Crispian, almost against his will, to hint that Rapallo had been a mistake.

In spite of this chiding, it was evident that after six weeks of observation the wrath of the Independent Socialists had subsided. This was shown when, at the end of May, the U.S.P.D. voted with the government parties to defeat a motion of "no confidence" proposed by the Nationalists.¹¹¹ What was chiefly responsible

for again inspiring the U.S.P.D. with trust in the government was the latter's reply to the Reparations Commission. In a note of March 21 the Allies had demanded permission to investigate German finances as a precondition to a possible foreign loan, and the German government had replied on May 28 that it was amenable. The Right heavily criticized this compliance as according the Allies an opportunity to fasten a comprehensive financial control over the Reich, but the U.S.P.D. was much impressed.¹¹² The government's action was proof to the party that Rapallo had not essentially altered the policy of fulfillment.

The Socialist goal of peace through understanding was not noticeably furthered by Rapallo. Certainly the treaty was a contribution to the pacification of Europe but only through a partial restoration of the balance of power. To most people at home and abroad it heralded the return of Germany to great-power status. On the other hand, the pact thoroughly harmonized with the simple pattern of Socialist foreign policy, one essential thread of which was surely the restoration of Soviet Russia to the family of nations.

DE PAUL UNIVERSITY

¹¹¹ *Schulthess* (1922), p. 64.

¹¹² *Freiheit*, May 29, 1922.

